

CORRESPONDENCE

Birth-Rates and Economics

To the Editor, *Eugenics Review*

SIR,—Regarding the reply of Mr. D. V. Glass to my letter (July 1935, page 170), I agree of course that my contention that "a rapidly falling Asiatic birth-rate would bring a boom in world trade" implies that a cessation of births would be still more effective. But I demur to his view that, because medical services there are generally backward, a rapidly falling birth-rate would soon cause an absolute decline of population. I am confident that as the starvation went on diminishing the mortality would go on diminishing until the average duration of life, which at present is under thirty years, reached over fifty years.

B. DUNLOP, M.B.

London, S.W.15.

The Decline in Population

To the Editor, *Eugenics Review*

SIR,—In your July issue you say: "How shall we combat our own imminent decline in population?" Why on earth should you desire to combat it? The decline, when it comes, will be a priceless blessing.

Britain is by far the most densely populated of the large countries of the world. Its population is wholly due to the fact that for several generations Britain was the workshop of the world. It sent out manufactures to all the world, and took food in exchange. Now every country is trying to be its own workshop, and our export trade has dropped to a fraction of its former magnitude. We are left with a vast population, of which 80 per cent. lives in towns, and with two million unemployed.

What are we to do with this vast mass of people for whom our cities can no longer furnish employment? Put them on the land? Well, to begin with, it is exceedingly difficult to make townsmen go on the land. But suppose we could, any great increase of produce from the land could only be obtained by a great rise in the price of food, and a fall in the standard of life. Mr. Lloyd George and other unmathematical persons may say this is nonsense, but the whole experience of mankind proves it. The great Continental countries which keep more of their land under the plough than we do, only succeed by enormous protective duties which make the cost of food very high. Writing last spring Sir Daniel Hall said: "A little time ago the Liverpool price of wheat was 5s. 2d., while at the same time it was being maintained at 14s. 6d. in Paris, at 13s. 6d. in Berlin, and at 14s. in Milan" (*The Frustration of Science*, page 24). As wages are far lower in France, Germany, and Italy than

in England, we can see at what a terrible cost those countries maintain their high agricultural production.

Still more serious is the military danger of our immense population. Not more than 40 per cent. are fed from our own land, and the rest depend on food from abroad. In the last war we had a narrow escape, but we could hardly escape again. The submarine is beyond comparison more efficient than it was then, and there are now innumerable aeroplanes to spy out and sink transports bearing food to our shores. Another long war would mean certain starvation.

In the teeth of these facts there are people fatuous enough to lament the approaching decline of our population. That decline should be hailed with universal joy, for it is the only road to security and plenty.

R. B. KERR.

335 Sydenham Road, Croydon.

. This letter is discussed on page 183.—ED.

Effects of Contraception

To the Editor, *Eugenics Review*

SIR,—In view of the research upon scientific aspects of contraception that is now being supported by the *Eugenics Society*, the medical sub-committee of the National Birth Control Association believes that the questions raised in the enclosed letter will be of special interest to your readers. This letter was sent some months ago to one of the most distinguished opponents of birth-control; but no reply to it has been received up to the present.

MARGARET PYKE,

Secretary, National Birth Control Association.
26 Eccleston Street, S.W.1.

12th March, 1935.

Dr. F. J. McCann,
86 Portland Place, W.1.

DEAR SIR,—The Executive Committee of the National Birth Control Association has recently appointed a medical sub-Committee to investigate the present methods of contraception which are being used throughout the country, and to keep in touch with the clinics, manufacturers, and scientific investigators, with a view to collecting satisfactory data so that the Committee can, from time to time, issue authoritative information with regard to contraceptive methods, thereby helping to eliminate those methods which are unsatisfactory.

The medical sub-Committee has had brought to its notice a pamphlet written by you and issued by the League of National Life, entitled *The Effects of Contraceptive Practice on the Female Sexual Organs*. This pamphlet has been carefully read by the members of the Committee and there are several statements in it which appear to them to require

some elucidation. The Committee has also read your latest book, *The Treatment of Common Female Ailments*, and would consider it an act of courtesy on your part if you would be so kind as to explain one or two points about which they are not quite clear. They feel that you will be the first to agree that it is essential to obtain accurate scientific information about these points.

1. On page 6, paragraph 2, you state :
" I have satisfied myself that lutein cysts do arise in the ovary as a result of contraception."
Can you give us detailed particulars of cases of this nature ?
2. On page 9 you state that the good effects of normal coitus are nullified by contraceptives.
Can you give us the evidence on which you base this statement ?
3. On page 8, paragraph 2, you state that :
" the seminal fluid . . . is sucked into the Uterine Cavity."
We should be grateful for evidence of this.
4. On page 11, paragraph 3, you state that :
" Uterine hæmorrhage is produced shortly after the insertion of a quinine pessary."
Can you give us proof of this, and also particulars of the type of bleeding to which you refer ? Does the bleeding to which you refer come from the cervical or uterine mucosa ? If it is cervical in origin is the bleeding due to local irritation ? If uterine, is it due to the action of the quinine on the musculature of the uterus ?
5. In considering contraception you class all methods of contraception together, i.e. coitus interruptus, the sheath, the cap, the douche, and soluble suppository, etc.
Is there not a necessity for distinguishing between the various methods of birth-control,

some of which are admittedly bad ? Do you recognise this distinction ?

6. On page 11, paragraph 4, you say :
" I have for many years, both in teaching and in practice, condemned douching as a routine, while its employment after coitus is specially harmful."
Can you give evidence for the latter part of this statement ?
7. On page 14, paragraph 1, you state :
" If a woman be really exhausted by repeated child-bearing she ceases to bear children."
Can you supply evidence for this statement ?

The Treatment of Common Female Ailments

On page 294, paragraph 3, in discussing the use of soapy water as a douche you imply that this is a satisfactory method. Are we to understand that you would advise this method ?

On page 296, paragraph 2, you state that the spermatozoa probably " combine with other cells." Can you give us any definite evidence of this ?

On page 296, paragraph 4, you state " the absorption [of seminal fluid] in all probability takes place from the uterus." Can you give us any evidence for this statement ?

On page 298, paragraph 3, you state that after the prolonged practice of contraception " the uterus exhibits changes associated with a state of chronic congestion." Can you give us evidence of these changes, together with an indication of the method used ?

Whilst apologising for the number of these questions, the Committee would be extremely grateful for your help in elucidating these matters.

Yours very truly,

(Signed) HELENA WRIGHT,
Chairman of the medical sub-Committee, National Birth Control Association.

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